

Puerto Ricans to Choose Their Future in a Fair Process

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Media contact: Rebecca Dreilinger 202-225-8203

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(Washington, D.C.) Today, Congressman Luis V. Gutierrez (D-IL) was joined by colleagues Congresswoman Nydia M. Velázquez (D-N.Y.) and Puerto Rico Governor, Aníbal Acevedo Vilá, in introducing the **Puerto Rico Self-Determination Act of 2007**, which would provide the people of Puerto Rico a fair process to help them reach a democratic consensus on the future of the island.

"Any initiative regarding the future of Puerto Rico must first come from Puerto Ricans," said Congressman Gutierrez. "For this reason, I have cosponsored the *Puerto Rico Self-Determination Act of 2007*, which provides a fair, comprehensive and democratic process for the people of Puerto Rico to determine their status."

The continuing debate surrounding the status of Puerto Rico has attracted numerous proposals from members of Congress. While these bills are well intentioned, they do not provide the citizens of Puerto Rico with a direct mechanism to be involved in the deliberations of the status process from beginning to end.

This act would ensure the people of Puerto Rico a democratic process of self-determination by encouraging a path of dialogue and consensus. A Constitutional Convention, comprised of delegates elected by the people of Puerto Rico, would adopt a self-determination option, which then must be ratified by the people of Puerto Rico before being considered by Congress.

This bill is unique in that it provides a fair process through several checks and balances and affords time for debate, negotiation and consensus building in Puerto Rico. It also allows Puerto Ricans who live in the United States, but who do not reside on the island, to participate in the self-determination process.

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